



The Folktale of Batu Menangis and Ubasuteyama

Haliya Ramadanti¹, Alesandro Darren², Caleb Vincenzo³, Marisa Rianti⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Department of Japanese Literature, Universitas Kristen, Bandung, Indonesia

ABSTRACT: Folklore refers to traditional stories originating from people of the past, passed down orally through generations. Two narratives that share similarities in their depiction of the relationship between children and parents are *Batu Menangis* (The Weeping Stone) from Indonesia and *Ubasuteyama* from Japan. Although they originate from different cultures, both share a common theme but differ in their approach to delivering the message. The focus of this issue is how differences in characters, setting, and conflict resolution in these two stories reflect society's views on parents. This study aims to deeply analyze the differences in story structure and cultural values between the two tales through a comparative literature perspective. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method and narrative comparison techniques. Data were collected through literature studies of the two folklore texts and then analyzed narratively to compare plot, characterization, and setting to identify the cultural connections within them. The analysis shows that *Batu Menangis* constructs its narrative through a physical punishment approach resulting from disobedience, reflecting the position of parents in Indonesian culture. Conversely, *Ubasuteyama* emphasizes the wisdom of the elderly as a savior in social conflict, reflecting Japanese respect for seniority and life experience. Both stories affirm that respect for parents is an ethical value; however, *Batu Menangis* highlights the aspect of moral consequences for individuals, while *Ubasuteyama* highlights the combined benefit of a child's devotion.

Corresponding Author:

Alesandro Darren

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Batu Menangis, comparative literature, folklore, parents, qualitative descriptive, Ubasuteyama.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Folktales reflect the values, norms, and worldview of a society, passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition. (Damayanti, 2020; Janottama et al., 2017; Juliawati et al., 2022). As part of culture, folktales serve not only as entertainment but also as a powerful instrument of moral education. (Kusmana et al., 2020; Wahyuni & Budiman, 2025). Two folktales that possess profound values in depicting the relationship between children and parents are Batu Menangis from Indonesia and Ubasuteyama from Japan. Although originating from different cultural and geographical backgrounds, both compellingly explore the same central theme how a child treats elderly parents.

In Indonesia, Batu Menangis is known as a very popular legend. The story centers on the disobedience of a child named Darmi toward her mother. Darmi, blinded by her physical beauty and arrogance, refused to acknowledge her mother in public. This rejection of her mother's identity constituted a serious moral transgression in Indonesian culture, which places great emphasis on respect for parents. This conflict ends tragically through the power of the mother's prayer, which brings about a physical curse, turning the child into stone as a symbol of eternal regret.

On the other hand, Japan has the story of Ubasuteyama, also known as "Grandmother's Abandonment Mountain." The story's origin lies in a dark ancient tradition, in which, due to poverty and famine, elderly parents had to be abandoned on a mountain so they would not become a burden to their families. However, unlike the Weeping Stone, which emphasizes the child's wicked nature, Ubasuteyama focuses more on moral dilemmas, a child's filial piety, and parental wisdom. The story concludes by demonstrating that the parents' experience and wisdom remain valuable assets that save the community from the threat of a cruel ruler.

A comparison of these two stories is particularly relevant to study due to the contrast in how their moral messages are conveyed. Batu Menangis uses fear and punishment to instill the value of filial piety. Conversely, Ubasuteyama uses an approach of "empathy"

and demonstrates the value of parents to reach the same conclusion: respect for parents. Through this comparative analysis, we can see how differences in social and cultural structures in Indonesia and Japan influence how they construct the figures of the "good child" and the "valued parent." Furthermore, this study is also important for examining whether these traditional values remain relevant amid shifting times, where family relationship patterns are beginning to change due to modernization. By comparing these two narratives, we can gain a broader understanding of the human virtue of honoring one's parents that transcend cultural borders. Several similar studies on folktales featuring disobedient children appear to be quite popular. A literature review identified sixteen such tales, which are found across many regions in Indonesia. (Sugiarti et al., 2023). In her research, Sugiarti employed a comparative literary approach. The data she collected was analyzed through *close reading*. Data analysis employed a structural-comparative method and was processed using a qualitative-interactive model. The results indicate that folktales of disobedient children convey a moral warning emphasizing the importance of respecting parents, while also serving to build the character of the younger generation. The plot, which depicts a transformation from poverty to great wealth, serves as an inspirational narrative within the story, while the plotline involving a curse conveys the moral message not to commit acts that violate proper conduct toward parents. (Sugiarti et al., 2023). This study has the advantage of focusing on stories of disobedient children using a comparative literary method. The comparisons are also within the same theme. This study still offers significant opportunities for comparison with similar stories from other countries.

Research on the narrative of disobedient children in folktales has been extensively conducted. Sugiarti et al. (2023) identified sixteen Indonesian folktales with similar motifs using comparative literature methods and *close reading* techniques. Their findings confirm that narratives of curses serve as moral warnings regarding breaches of propriety toward parents. Meanwhile, Anggita et al. (2025) highlight three core values: respect, self-awareness, and the consequences of arrogance. In an international context, Everlyn Huang (2012) traces the influence of Buddhist, Chinese, and Indian texts on the imagery of Japanese folktales. On the other hand, Jason Danely (2012) offers a demographic perspective on how the growing elderly population in Japan influences the interpretation of familial ethics and parental identity. Although previous research has dissected intrinsic aspects such as plot and characters, there is a shared human essence in viewing morality, even when constructed within different social contexts. This study fills that gap by deepening Levi-Strauss's structuralist theory to dissect the hidden logic behind differing conflict resolutions—between tragic punishment in Indonesian culture and collective wisdom in Japanese culture—thereby complementing the existing literature in a compatible manner.

From the three studies above, it can be seen that they employ different methods, such as literature reviews that focus on comparisons of plot, characters, and narrative style, while comparative analyses are based on intrinsic structures such as theme, plot, characters, and setting. Despite their similarities, differences, and structural parallels among literary works, this research provides insights into how stories are constructed narratively within their respective social and cultural contexts. Among these three researchers, some studies utilize Levi-Strauss's theory; this presents an opportunity for researchers to delve deeper into this theory, making their work significant as it complements the existing literature and is compatible with it.

II. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, an approach aimed at describing data based on folktales from two countries. The selected samples are an Indonesian folktale titled "Batu Menangis" and a Japanese folktale titled "Ubasuteyama." These two samples were chosen because they share a similar plot regarding the relationship between children and parents, but have different resolutions to the conflict. However, while these stories share a similar foundation, they exhibit striking differences in their conclusions. "Batu Menangis" ends with a punishment in the form of being turned into stone as a consequence of disobedience, while "Ubasuteyama" ends with a rescue and resolution based on the recognition of parental values. The approach used in this method employs a narrative approach based on Levi-Strauss's theory. (Rahayu, 2019). The stages are:

<p>Batu Menangis</p> <p>Plot Story The beautiful daughter, who had been scolded by her mother after learning that her mother couldn't afford to support her, was angry and felt sorry for her mother</p> <p>Conflict Darma treats her mother like a servant and is always being told what to do</p>	<p>West Kalimantan</p> <p>It has a unique geography and offers savory and spicy traditional dishes.</p> <p>Climax Introducing a mother and her daughter from a poor family, and then the daughter treats her mother like a slave</p>	<p>A wide variety of cultures, such as Dayak culture and traditional dance, namely</p> <p>Characters Darmi Ibu</p>
<p>Ubasuteyama</p> <p>Plot Story A young man abandoned his elderly grandmother in the mountains to lighten the family's burden</p>	<p>Conflict Times were hard for poor families who couldn't afford to feed their elderly relatives, so they were abandoned in the mountains</p> <p>Climax A young man and his grandmother went up a mountain, and the grandmother marked the path with sticks so her grandson could find his way home safely</p>	<p>Mount Nagano</p> <p>Home to sacred sites and remote mountains</p> <p>Characters Young man Grandmother</p>

Figure 1: Research Stages
Source: Research Team. 2026

Figure 1 shows that Stage 1 involved a literature review and data collection. The initial step began with data collection through an in-depth literature review. The researcher examined various sources, ranging from collections of folk tales to nationally and internationally accredited scientific journals. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; David, 2023). Digital searches were conducted to find the most authentic text versions so that the structural analysis would not lose its original context. The main focus in this stage was to find representative versions of the texts “Batu Menangis” and “Ubasuteyama,” as well as to conduct a simple analysis of the literature review findings to see how previous researchers dissected the motifs of disobedient children or the abandonment of parents from social and cultural perspectives. This was done to ensure that the resulting analysis does not merely repeat previous work but offers a new perspective. The second stage involved field observations through interviews with informants knowledgeable about folk tales. (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Widodo, 2014). This process served as a check to ensure that the collected data was valid and relevant. This activity also helps the researcher strengthen their understanding of Japanese culture and the local Indonesian values underlying the story. The third stage involves identifying data by creating tables and narratives from the selected stories for data identification; in this process, the story text is broken down into small narrative segments. (Fiantika et al., 2020; Han & Goleman, Richard; McKee Annie, 2019; Pandanwangi et al., 2021; Peow, 2015). The researcher compiles a comparative table that aligns the plot sequences of “Batu Menangis” and “Ubasuteyama” in chronological order. This table makes it easier for the researcher to see where the two stories share similarities, such as the presence of an abandoned parent, and where differences occur, such as the child’s response to social burdens. In the comparative analysis, the researcher analyzed the differences in conflict resolution: in “Batu Menangis,” the conflict ends with a curse (punishment), whereas in “Ubasuteyama,” it concludes with wisdom and reconciliation. In the fourth stage, the researcher interprets the findings; the researcher not only describes what happens in the stories but also explains why the conflict resolutions differ using Levi-Strauss’s analysis. The researcher seeks the hidden logic behind the tragic ending of “The Crying Stone” compared to the ending of “Ubasuteyama.” In the fifth stage, all the results of this study are then summarized into a conclusion that addresses the issue of the reciprocal relationship between children and parents in two different cultures.

III. RESULTS

In this section of the research findings, the researcher presents the results in the form of structured tables comparing the two folktales: “Batu Menangis” from Indonesia and “Ubasuteyama” from Japan. The findings are presented in tabular form to make it easier for readers to grasp the essence and narrative of each story and to identify the similarities and differences between the two folktales. Through this tabular approach, every element of the story—including theme, characters, plot, setting, and atmosphere—can be

tracked and traced as the story unfolds. This analysis is not only used to analyze the story structure within these two folktales but also to examine the moral values contained within them. Both stories share a central theme focused on parents and their relationship with children, though the manner of presentation differs significantly. "The Crying Stone" teaches that the consequences of disobedience toward parents lead to permanent regret, while "Ubasutyama" teaches that all actions we take, whether good or bad, ultimately return to ourselves, and that parental love serves as the solution to the problem in the "Ubasutyama" story. Therefore, based on the explanations provided earlier, it can be concluded that the research presented in this table allows researchers to organize the research data for further study and easier analysis, making it a more practical and time-saving approach. Additionally, it makes it easier for readers to understand and identify the essence of both folktales. This table summarizes the various important elements found in both folk tales. Therefore, readers can refer to the table below to examine the elements in both stories and identify the differences that have been thoroughly analyzed.

Table 1: Comparison of Folktales

No.	Comparison	Batu Menangis	Ubasuteyama
1	Theme	Focuses on a disgraceful child (Darmi) who is ashamed of her mother's poverty and treats her as her servant in front of others.	A story of love and sacrifice. Though there exists the tradition of abandoning one's elders in the mountains, the folktale focuses on a guilt-ridden young man.
2	Character	Darmi, a gorgeous but prideful, spoiled, lazy, and disgraceful girl who looks down on her own mother, and the patient, hard-working mother who eventually reaches her limits of being disgraced.	A kind, young man, faced with a moral dilemma. A wise old lady, the young man's grandmother, snaps tree branches on the way to the mountain to ensure the young man doesn't get lost on the way back home.
3	Plot	The plot progresses linearly with a tragic climax, ending with Darmi being cursed and petrified as punishment for her sins towards her mother.	The plot progresses linearly with a happy resolution. Thanks to the old lady's wits and love, they overcame the village ruler's.
4	Time Period	There is an emphasis on the fact that while the mother works hard in the fields "every day," the girl spends every day playing dress up. This shows the long-accumulating heartache that eventually comes out all at once in the end.	Time moves in sequence, though slowed down. The time setting is emphasized during the dusk segments, which gives a bleak and tense atmosphere since the young man must abandon the old lady before nighttime.
5	Background Atmosphere	Tense and tragic when her son refused to acknowledge her in public, and when she prayed for a curse to befall him, only for him to eventually come to regret it, though it was too late. A heartbreaking and poignant atmosphere as the mother struggles to work on her own while her daughter behaves selfishly and lazily, then a tense, tragic one when the daughter disgraces her own mother in public to the point that the mother prays a curse upon him—a curse that brings out a belated feeling of regret and remorse.	It depicts a tense atmosphere with the quiet, cold mountain setting. Then, a sad one as the child carries his mother, especially during their parting on the mountain. The dilemma and inner conflict of a child who must obey tradition yet is riddled with guilt for abandoning his own parents. And finally, a poignant one when the mother continues to show her love by showing her son the directions so that he may return home safely.
6	Message	To love one's parents, not being a disgraceful and arrogant child, and that filial impiety will bring about divine punishment which cannot be turned back by remorse.	Love one's parents, being loving, grateful, and willing to love with no expectation of returns. The folktale reminds people that what goes around comes around.

Based on the table above, this story conveys a message to society regarding the importance of respecting parents, valuing their opinions, and heeding their advice. The discussion will be explored in greater depth in the discussion section below.

IV. DISCUSSION

The stories drawn from two countries, which is Indonesia and Japan, titled “Batu Menangis” and “Ubasuteyama”, both share a similar focus, which is to explore how two cultures view the relationship between parents and their children. Folktale themselves are a type of traditional story that is used to help readers understand a local region’s heritage (Damayanti, 2020; Juliawati et al., 2022; Ratu, 2017). Both stories shared a major theme, which is children's devotion to their parents; however, they have different endings. In Weeping Stone, the core of the story is about punishment for disobedience, where a mother is ashamed to admit her child, and is cursed into stone. Meanwhile, Ubasuteyama talks about a mother’s love and values that ultimately save her child from the government’s cruel laws, which lead them to happiness and renewed respect for parents. When compared to the journal on Lake Toba and Tsuru No Ongaeshi, there is a common pattern in explaining that folklores also serve another purpose, which is to convey ancestral values to future generations, such as in the moral message about the importance of keeping one’s word and not breaking promises. This is similar to “Batu Menangis,” which highlights that violating the moral values will lead to consequences. On the other side, the story shares a common essence with “Ubasuteyama” in which the wisdom of parents should be repaid with love, not by being cast aside. In Indonesia, folktales are often used as a solid tool for moral education to educate children to respect their parents. Meanwhile in Japan, Stories like Ubasuteyama and Tsuru No Ongaeshi often highlight the symbols of hope, hard work, and life values that are characteristic of their society. The difference in the story’s ending was also greatly influenced by the sociocultural backgrounds of each country. In Indonesia, as reflected in The Weeping Stone, stories often serve to encourage children to obey their parents. Extrinsic elements such as religious values and customary laws frequently appear in stories for people who violate moral boundaries. Meanwhile in Japan, stories like Ubasuteyama stress hope, hard work, and ingenuity in the face of adversity. Japanese culture that appreciates values and harmony is reflected in how its characters resolve the issues with wisdom. By comparing these two stories, it becomes clear that even though the method of delivery is different, one through curse and the other through wisdom, the goal remains the same, which is to maintain human values and the dignity of parents within the family. The application of Levi-Strauss’s structuralist theory reveals a "hidden logic" within the binary oppositions of nature versus culture present in both narratives. In Batu Menangis, the character Darmi represents a failure of culture; her refusal to acknowledge her mother is a violation of the social contract that governs the family unit. Her transformation into stone—a raw element of nature—signifies a permanent expulsion from the human social structure as punishment for her pride. This reflects an Indonesian worldview where parental status is often elevated to a sacred level, and "divine punishment" is viewed as a necessary consequence to maintain moral boundaries. The story uses the "tragic climax" to instill a fear-based respect, ensuring that the younger generation understands the irreversible nature of "divine retribution". In contrast, the structural logic of Ubasuteyama uses the "mountain" (nature) not as a final place of punishment but as a site of transition, where nature is tamed by parental wisdom. While the "ancient tradition" of abandonment stems from the harsh realities of poverty and famine (nature's scarcity), the resolution is found in the grandmother's "wits and love". Her act of snapping tree branches to ensure her son’s safety represents the enduring nature of "parental wisdom" that persists even when the parent is marginalized. Unlike the individual tragedy of Darmi, the resolution in Ubasuteyama serves a collective benefit; the mother’s experience saves the entire community from a "cruel ruler". This highlights a Japanese cultural emphasis on seniority and the practical utility of life experience as essential assets for social harmony and survival. Furthermore, these stories illustrate different constructions of the "moral dilemma." Batu Menangis presents a clear-cut dichotomy between the "wicked child" and the "suffering parent," leaving no room for empathy toward the transgressor. However, Ubasuteyama introduces a "guilt-ridden" protagonist caught between social law (the tradition of abandonment) and personal ethics (filial piety). This nuanced approach encourages the audience to reach the conclusion of "respect for parents" through empathy rather than through the threat of a curse. Ultimately, while the "method of delivery" differs—one through the finality of a curse and the other through the redemptive power of ingenuity—both tales reinforce the "shared essence of humanity". They act as "social anchors" that preserve the dignity of the elderly, ensuring that even amidst modernization and shifting family patterns, the virtue of honoring one's parents remains a foundational ethical value. Through these narratives, both Indonesian and Japanese cultures communicate that the strength of a society is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable yet wisest members.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be observed that the Indonesian folktale “Batu Menangis” and the Japanese tale Ubasuteyama share strong structural similarities despite originating from different cultural contexts. Through qualitative descriptive methods, comparative literature, and Levi Strauss’s theory, it was found that both texts feature similar plotlines characterised by a conflict of loyalties and disobedience as well as culture and nature. This study demonstrates that the transformation of humans turning into stone in Weeping Stone and the tradition of abandoning parents in Ubasuteyama describe the expression of moral conflict in society. From Levi-Strauss’s perspective, both cultures place parents at the center of human values; the difference lies in the narrative of Batu Menangis, which employs a tragic punishment as a warning, while Ubasuteyama uses wisdom as a solution to conflict. Furthermore, the behavior of the characters or their roles in both stories shares the common element of respecting parents. From this comparison, it can be seen that folklore is not merely a fairy tale, but a means of communication, a way to preserve cultural values as a social structure, and an effective moral education for the value of respecting parents. Human thought tends to

follow consistent patterns in social relationships to maintain social structure; this analysis reinforces the view that, in fact, Cultural diversity remains grounded in the shared essence of humanity when it comes to moral perspectives.

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VII. DISCLOSURE

The author reports no conflicts of interest in this work.

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